

In a March 31 speech, President Obama appeared to finally cede ground in his administration's hard line policy against domestic oil and gas drilling. But any such hope of his adopting an even-handed energy approach vaporized as soon as the White House's smokescreen cleared.

The president made verbal overtures to offshore oil and gas development, but he stopped well short of endorsing an effective approach, set in motion before he took office, to tap these resources.

The president declared: "So today we're announcing the expansion of offshore oil and gas exploration, but in ways that balance the need to harness domestic energy resources and the need to protect America's natural resources."

His call for more Gulf of Mexico energy development was about the only thing positive in his proposal. But more drilling in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico will need congressional approval, and some Florida lawmakers are already lining up against it.

Two years after Congress and President Bush lifted a long-time ban on offshore drilling in order to open up as much as 14 billion barrels of oil and 55 trillion cubic feet of natural gas to an energy strapped America, President Obama is slamming on the brakes.

He imposes a new ban on oil and gas drilling in the Northeast Atlantic, along the Pacific Coast, as well as in Alaska's Bristol Bay. He effectively walls off up to 10.5 billion barrels of oil along the Pacific Coast alone.

The president's new energy announcement halts plans to lease America's Outer Continental Shelf areas for drilling, beginning this year and continuing to 2015. Instead, he would discard the lease agreement in favor of a more limited approach which would not even take effect for another two years.

By reinstating a drilling moratorium on most of the offshore areas that were previously opened, the Obama administration is clearly not serious about addressing the nation's more immediate energy needs. Nor is it concerned about the impact of its actions on our struggling economy.

The American Energy Alliance estimates that 1.2 million jobs would be created each year if President Obama would allow offshore drilling.

However, the president remains committed to passing his controversial Cap and Trade legislation, no matter the cost to our economy or the number of jobs that will be lost.

I voted against Cap and Trade and I oppose President Obama's latest smoke and mirrors energy plan which will do little to deliver adequate energy supplies to reinvigorate our struggling economy.

I am a cosponsor of the American Energy Act (HR 2846), which was introduced by the Republican leadership last year. This legislation is an "all-of-the-above" strategy that takes advantage of all available domestic energy resources, including offshore oil and gas, without

imposing new taxes on the American consumer.

It would increase production of American made energy in an environmentally safe manner, encourage greater conservation, and spur investment in alternative energy sources such as nuclear, hydrogen, solar, wind, and clean coal.

Bureaucrats' Fish Stories:

On March 29, the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) released a proposal to drastically shorten the length of the Gulf of Mexico red snapper fishing season. If this announcement had come three days later, it might have been confused with an April Fools' Day joke. When you talk to any Gulf fisherman they will tell you that it's getting harder to catch anything other than red snapper.

The NMFS' new proposal to reduce the Gulf red snapper fishing season to 54 days runs counter to every recent observation and trend that has been reported about the Gulf red snapper population.

Most scientists believe the red snapper population in the Gulf of Mexico to be at historically high levels as a result of thousands of artificial reefs, including oil and gas platforms. Yet, the Fisheries Service continues to ignore data that show the rapidly expanding red snapper fishery population.

The 2010 Consolidated Appropriations Act Conference Report, which passed Congress in December, directed the federal government to use fishery-independent data when calculating red snapper populations, in addition to assessing the economic impact of their decisions on our local communities.

Over the last several weeks, I have met with dozens of commercial and recreational fishing boat captains who are unified in their view that federal overregulation of the red snapper is one of the biggest threats to their business.

I will continue to pressure the NMFS to use data which correctly reflect the red snapper population in determining fishing season length and catch limits.

My staff and I work for you. If we can ever be of service, do not hesitate to call my office toll free at 1-800-288-8721.